

## DEGU CARE SHEET

### DEGU CHARACTERISTICS & ANATOMY

- Full grown degu will be 5-8 inches from nose to rump, with a tail about 5 inches long. Use a two-handed cup technique to handle them.
- Large eyes and excellent eye sight, excellent hearing and sense of smell.
- They can jump several feet high and are excellent climbers.
- Tail is very fragile. \*Never pick up a degu by the tail, the sheath can separate very easily and will not grow back, this is a defense mechanism against predators.\*
- They are good natured, gentle, active, and very sociable.
- Life span is 5-8 years average.
- Degus teeth are naturally a yellow/orange color.
- Front teeth grown continuously, it's important to monitor the length and provide lots of chew toys so the teeth don't get too long.

### COMPATIBILITY

- Degus are highly social so it's strongly recommended to keep at least 2, a male and female or 2 compatible females is the best combination.
- Males and females are both very friendly, males get slightly heavier than females.

### CAGE

- Must be out of direct sunlight, away from drafts, fans, heaters, etc.
- Degus are powerful chewers and can chew out of most plastic cages, a glass aquarium is the safest place to house a degu(s).
- Degus require a larger cage than other rodents since they like to run, jump, and climb. A multilevel cage with lots of ramps is preferable. The minimum cage size for 1-2 degus is 12"x24"x9".
- The cage must be well ventilated, room temperature (20-25°C) and humidity minimum 40% (50-55 if there are babies).
- An exercise wheel is a must, 10-12 inches diameter and 4 inches wide.
- Lots of toys, degus are very smart and need things to keep them occupied. Ladders, ramps, tubes, hamster running balls, dust baths, chew sticks.
- Always have clean fresh chlorinated water available, a water bottle works best.
- Food should always be available.

For more information call 780-459-6896 or come visit us!

- Both food and water should be replaced daily and dishes/bottles cleaned.
- Aspen shavings are recommended and should be cleaned weekly.
- A full cage cleaning should be done weekly, clean all toys, accessories, and the cage. Use hot water and an animal safe cleaner.
- Grass or hay should be provided for nesting material along with a nest box.
- Degus also enjoy a weekly dust bath. Place the dust bath in their cage and give them 15-20 minutes then remove it.

---

## NUTRITION

- Dry food should be available all the time, a mix of rodent and guinea pig pellets or degu pellets.
- Do not feed any fresh food for at least the first month. Fresh foods must be introduced very slowly and in very small amounts.
- Fresh foods should be given every day. Apples, raisins, carrots, collard greens, kale, tomatoes, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds, peanuts are safe foods as long as they are washed and all natural (no salted nuts, etc.).
- Avoid too many high sugar treats as degus are naturally diabetic and too much sugar is harmful to them.
- Do Not Feed: cooked or processed foods, sweets.

---

## COMMUNICATION

---

### BODY LANGUAGE

- Tail wagging: excited state, can be a good or bad situation.
- Tail up and rump display: threatened, usually a sign of submission.
- Raised hairs: planning attack or startled.
- Hops, jumps, body twisting, and running: play behavior.
- Standing on hind legs batting at each-other's faces: aggressive fighting behavior.
- Standing on hind legs, sniffing air: curiosity.
- Running quickly back to its nest or freezing: fear.
- Huddling: friendly degus will huddle to share warmth and watch for predators.
- Dust baths: to keep clean and share a common smell.

---

### VOCALIZATIONS

- Alarm or warning call: high pitched squeak at the sight of danger.

For more information call 780-459-6896 or come visit us!

- Protest squeak: sounds like the alarm squeak but longer duration, when the degu is uncomfortable.
- Squeal: long, loud, high pitched sound indicating injury or pain.
- Tooth chatter: frightened, agitated, or angry. Do not approach until they have calmed down.
- Clucks: cross between a soft chicken cluck and when you cluck your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Degus do this while grooming.
- Chuck-Wee: alert but not frightened, sounds like a garbled cluck with a chuckle of buzzing sound at the end.
- Gurgles: used in degu conversation.
- Chuckles: communication between adults and babies.
- Chirps: contentment when degus are together.
- Peeps and whistles: baby degus make these sounds while feeding.
- Whimpers: social call to keep track of each other's location.
- Abandonment call or isolation cry: high pitched cry made by babies letting the adults know they are distressed and insecure.

For more information call 780-459-6896 or come visit us!